



WHAT TO DO IF
YOU'RE EXPOSED TO A
**BIOLOGICAL
THREAT**



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• What can I do to protect my family from a biological attack or threat?

A biological threat includes release of germs or other biological substances that can kill or incapacitate people, livestock, and crops. Many agents must be inhaled, enter through a cut in the skin or be eaten to make you sick. Some biological agents, such as anthrax, do not cause contagious diseases. Others, like the smallpox virus, can result in diseases you can catch from other people.

The three basic groups of biological agents that would likely be used as weapons are bacteria, viruses, and toxins. Most biological agents are difficult to grow and maintain. Many break down quickly when exposed to sunlight and other environmental factors, while others, such as anthrax spores, are very long lived.

Biological threats can be natural or man-made.

Terrorists can disperse biological agents by spraying them into the air, by infecting animals that carry the disease to humans, and by contaminating food and water. Delivery methods include:

- **Aerosols**—biological agents can be dispersed into the air as a fine mist or powder that may drift for miles. Inhaling the agent may cause disease in people or animals.
- **Animals**—some diseases can be spread by insects and animals, such as fleas, mice, flies, mosquitoes, and livestock.
- **Food and water contamination**—some pathogenic organisms and toxins can persist in food and water supplies. Most microbes can be killed and toxins deactivated by cooking food and boiling water. Most microbes are killed by boiling water for one minute, but some require more time. Follow official instructions.
- **Person-to-person**—a few infectious agents can be spread from person to person. Humans have been the source of infection for smallpox, plague, and the Lassa viruses.

WHAT TO DO BEFORE A BIOLOGICAL ATTACK

- Check with your doctor to ensure that all required or suggested immunizations are-up-to-date. Children and the elderly are particularly vulnerable to biological agents.
- Consider installing a High Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) filter in your furnace return duct. These filters remove particles in the 0.3- to 10-micron range and will filter out most biological agents that may enter your home. If you do not have a central heating or cooling system, a stand-alone portable HEPA filter can be used.

IF THERE IS A BIOLOGICAL THREAT

Unlike an explosion, a biological threat may or may not be immediately obvious. While it is possible that you will see signs of a biological threat, as was sometimes the case with the anthrax mailings, it is more likely that local health care workers will report a pattern of unusual illness or there will be a wave of sick people requesting emergency medical attention. You will probably learn of the danger through



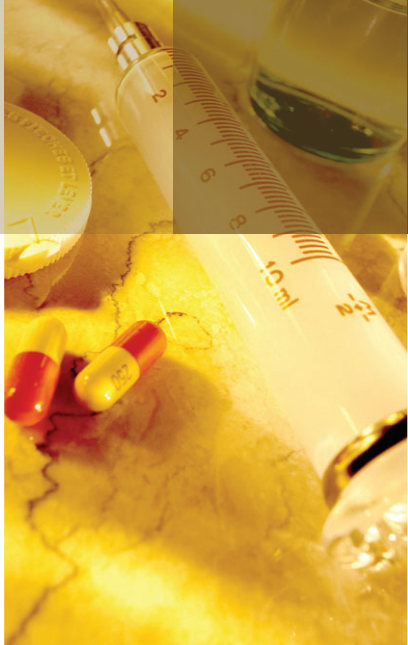
an emergency radio or TV broadcast, or some other signal used in your community. You might get a telephone call or emergency response workers may come to your door.

In the event of a biological threat, public officials may not immediately be able to provide information on what you should do. It will take time to determine exactly what the illness is, how it should be treated, and who is in danger. However, you should watch TV, listen to the radio, or check the Internet for official news including the following:

- Are you in the group or area authorities consider in danger?
- What are the signs and symptoms of the disease?
- Are medications or vaccines being distributed?
- Where? Who should get them?
- Where should you get emergency medical care if you become sick?

WHAT TO DO DURING A DECLARED BIOLOGICAL EMERGENCY

- If a family member becomes sick, it is important to be suspicious.
- Do not immediately assume, however, that you should go to a hospital emergency room or that any illness is the result of the biological threat. Symptoms of many common illnesses may overlap.



- Use common sense, practice good hygiene and cleanliness to avoid spreading germs, and get medical advice.
- Consider if you are in the group or area authorities believe to be in danger.
- If your symptoms match those described and you are in the group considered at risk, immediately get emergency medical attention.

If you are potentially exposed:

- Follow instructions of doctors and other public health officials.
- If the disease is contagious, expect to receive medical evaluation and treatment. You may be advised to stay away from others.
- If you have been exposed, you might be quarantined.

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- For non-contagious diseases, expect to receive medical evaluation and treatment.

If you become aware of an unusual and suspicious substance nearby:

- Quickly get away.
- Wash with soap and water.
- Contact authorities.
- Watch TV, listen to the radio, or check the Internet for official news and information including what the signs and symptoms of the disease are, if medications or vaccinations are being distributed, and where you should get medical attention if you become sick.
- If you become sick, get medical attention. ☠

USING HEPA FILTERS

HEPA filters may be useful during biological threats or attacks. If you have a central heating and cooling system in your home with a HEPA filter, leave it on if it is running or turn the fan on if it is not running. Moving the air in the house through the filter will help remove the agents from the air. If you have a portable HEPA filter, take it with you to the internal room where you are taking shelter and turn it on.

If you are in an apartment or office building that has a modern central heating and cooling system, the system's filtration should provide a relatively safe level of protection from outside biological contaminants. *HEPA filters will not filter chemical agents.*





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For more information about how to prepare your disaster supply kit and prepare for a specific terrorism threat or a natural or man-made disaster click on the related links:

www.homelandsecurity.ky.gov

www.redcross.org/preparedness/cdc_english/CDC.asp

www.ready.gov



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